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DEFENSE FOR CAGAN, FATA, BEIN
STATE FOR EUR (DICARLO), EUR/SCE (HOH, FOOKS)
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USNIC FOR WIGHTMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [BK](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BOSNIAN DEFENSE LEADERSHIP TO CONSIDER ADDITIONAL
IRAQ DEPLOYMENTS

REF: SARAJEVO 2047

Classified By: DCM Judith Cefkin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (S) DASD Debra Cagan visited Sarajevo September 28 to encourage the senior Bosnian defense leadership to augment their military deployments in support of coalition operations Iraq. DASD Cagan urged Minister of Defense Selmo Cikotic and Chief of the Joint Staff LTG Sifet Podzic to deploy an infantry company for static defense activities in Iraq and begin training Bosnia's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit in counter-Improvised Explosive Device (c-IED) activities. DASD Cagan told both men that the United States was prepared to provide training and equipment to the Bosnian Armed Forces if they undertook these activities. Both Cikotic and Podzic expressed their philosophical support for these deployments, but cited the shaky political environment and logistical strains on the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH) as potential roadblocks to their realization. Both pledged to actively engage on the issue, and requested further US assistance in making the case to the political leadership as to the necessity of expanding the Iraq mission. End Summary.

BOSNIAN TROOPS AS "FORCE MULTIPLIERS"

12. (S) DASD Cagan met separately with Defense Minister Cikotic and CHOD LTG Podzic in Sarajevo September 28 to discuss the possible expansion of the AFBiH's support for coalition operations in Iraq. DASD Cagan thanked the Minister and CHOD for Bosnia's contributions to the Iraq mission to date and told them that she was directly conveying

requests from the White House, Secretary of Defense, and MNF-I Commander General Petraeus. DASD Cagan said that as the President had recently stated in his address on the future of the Iraq mission, coalition partners would be playing an increasingly significant role in the next stage of military activities in Iraq. In particular, trusted partners were needed, DASD Cagan said, to deploy company-sized units for fixed site security in Iraq. These deployments would be "force multipliers" for US forces, and allow them to expand their military efforts across larger areas of Iraq. DASD Cagan requested that Cikotic and Podzic consider the deployment within four months of a company-sized unit for static defense activities.

TIME TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER C-IED

13. (S) DASD Cagan also requested that the Minister and CHOD authorize Bosnia's EOD unit to receive c-IED training that would allow it to undertake increasingly important activities for the coalition. DASD Cagan acknowledged that there had perhaps been a misunderstanding about the risks and scope of a c-IED mission, and assured Cikotic and Podzic that if Bosnia ever decided to deploy its forces in an c-IED mission, every possible effort would be made to mitigate the risk to the unit. DASD Cagan pointed out that IEDs had become the single greatest killer of civilians and coalition forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and few allies and partners have the necessary skills to combat these weapons. If Bosnia were to develop a c-IED capacity, Cagan said, it would become one of the US' "premier partners" and prepare itself to offer an important niche capability to NATO.

TRAINING TO MAKE BOSNIA "STRATEGIC PARTNER"

14. (S) For both the fixed site security and c-IED activities, DASD Cagan pledged to provide state of the art training and equipment to the AFBiH. DASD Cagan pointed out that valued coalition partners were eligible for substantial military assistance outside of traditional FMF and IMET programs. DASD Cagan told both Cikotic and Podzic that she could arrange the training of the infantry company compatible with "US standards" as soon as the Bosnia leadership make a commitment to the deployment. DASD Cagan said that training company-sized units would develop the AFBiH into a "strong strategic partner" of the United States, and would be of tremendous benefit to the Bosnian state. As for c-ED training, DASD Cagan said that the EOD unit would receive premier training in the field in the form of a 14 day program in Kuwait.

CIKOTIC: DEFT POLITICAL MANAGEMENT REQUIRED

15. (S) In response to DASD Cagan's requests, Minister Cikotic said that he was committed to making a "meaningful contribution to the cause of peace in Iraq" and looked for opportunities to expand the AFBiH's presence on the ground in Iraq. The Minister said that DASD Cagan had made "very strong arguments" in support of the infantry deployment and c-IED training but noted that he faced substantial logistical and political roadblocks to the activities, realization. Cikotic said that he had just received a report from the Joint Staff outlining the AFBiH's potential deployable assets in the near-term. Cikotic said that the AFBiH was currently strained to its limit guarding military properties that had yet to be returned to the entities, and because of this fact he the Joint Staff had only recommended deploying an infantry platoon to either Iraq or Afghanistan by mid-2008. (Comment. The concern expressed by the Minister on this count is real. Until the defense property issues are resolved between the entities and the state, the AFBiH will continue to be over-extended guarding a multitude of facilities. All three commanders of the AFBiH's infantry brigades told us in our recent visits to their HQs that nearly all of the soldiers in their command would be on guard duty until a decision was reached as to which

"non-prospective" property sites would be returned to the entities. End Comment.) Politically, Cikotic said that a large deployment could be a tough sell as it would have to make its way through the Presidency and Parliament in the current polarized climate. Cikotic said that while he favored the proposals as outlined by DASD Cagan, his higher priority remained "sustaining of commitment" to Bosnia,s overseas deployments and guarding against defense institutions becoming mired in ethnic politics. Cikotic also expressed some skepticism that the political will existed to immediately transition the EOD unit to c-IED duties.

16. (S) In this context, Cikotic at first suggested sticking with the Joint Staff's recommendation and only seeking the deployment of an additional platoon to Iraq. Cikotic said that he thought the platoon could be ready in four months if the United States was to provide the training. Cikotic also pointed out that in order to deploy a platoon, an entire company of 120 men would have to be trained in order to preserve a functioning program of rotations for the forces. DASD Cagan again pushed Cikotic to consider the deployment of an entire company, or at least a "platoon plus" of 50 men. Cikotic said he would take it under consideration, and requested that the USG submit a formal request in writing for

both the infantry company and c-IED training that included DASD Cagan,s "persuasive arguments." Cikotic said that he would present the proposal to the Presidency, Council of Ministers and Parliament and advocate on its behalf.

PODZIC: BOSNIA HAS OBLIGATION TO HELP

17. (S) For his part, Podzic told DASD Cagan that the debt of gratitude Bosnia owed the United States was immense, and just as other countries helped Bosnia end and recover from its own devastating war, Bosnia had an obligation to provide support to coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Podzic told DASD Cagan that in his opinion, the AFBiH could provide more forces to coalition operations than what was included in the Joint Staff,s recommendations to the Minister. Podzic said that it was important that all units deployed overseas be multi-ethnic, as it provided a model for the future integration of the AFBiH, and he doubted that a multi-ethnic company could be created in only four months. Podzic did accept DAO,s suggestion of standing up a multi-ethnic company from three mono-ethnic platoons as "very interesting" and a "possible solution." Podzic said he desperately wanted the training as outlined by DASD Cagan, as it would help on "the strategic level." Podzic echoed comments by the Minister to not push for the EOD unit assuming c-IED duties immediately as it would "frighten politicians," but noted that he and Cikotic already stood behind approving c-IED training.

COMMENT: COMPANY A POSSIBILITY, KEY IS MANAGING POLITICS

18. (S) DASD Cagan,s visit was a good opportunity for the senior Bosnian defense leadership to focus their attention on expanding Bosnia's contributions to coalition operations in Iraq. Not surprisingly considering their strong pro-American orientation, both Cikotic and Podzic signaled their willingness to support DASD Cagan's proposals for an expanded mission for the AFBiH. Both men were correct, however, to highlight the potential political difficulties in securing approval for these missions. We suspect that both Presidents Komsic and Silajdzic will initially be hesitant to support such proposals. In our own initial assessment, we are optimistic that we can gain approval for the fixed site security mission at the company level, but it will require our sustained lobbying and engagement. The politics of c-IED are trickier, considering the perceived level of risk of that mission.

19. (S) In moving forward, we have a couple of recommendations as to the best manner by which to achieve the proposals as

outlined by DASD Cagan. Cikotic's request for a letter outlining the request and providing supporting arguments for the deployment is a good first step, and we believe that such a letter should come from an appropriately high-level US official. We would also recommend that a bilateral between Cikotic and SecDef be scheduled on the margins of an upcoming meeting to help the Bosnians get to "yes." Such a meeting would be of tremendous benefit to our broader security goals as well, solidifying support for defense reform and delivering a strong message of US support for regional security, particularly as we reach the endgame of the Kosovo final status process. We would also recommend a letter from a senior Iraqi government official, citing the parallels in international efforts to stabilize Bosnia following the war and Iraq, requesting additional Bosnian help for stability operations in Iraq. The letter could provide the necessary political pressure and cover for President Silajdzic to not block the deployments.

10. (U) DASD Cagan has cleared this cable.
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